Minutes of the

Meeting of the Executive Committee

of the

World Council of Churches

1 - 2 December 1998

Meeting held at the University of Zimbabwe

Harare, Zimbabwe

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World Council of Churches

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

held in the Carr Saunders Hall, University of Zimbabwe,
Harare, Zimbabwe

1-2 December 1998

I. OPENING ACTIONS

A. Worship

Morning Worship was led by Ms Beatrice Odonkor (1 December), and by Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophilus (2 December).

B. Call to Order

The Moderator, His Holiness Aram I, called the meeting to order at 9.00 hrs. He welcomed members to Zimbabwe, noting that the agenda would deal primarily with matters relating to the final preparations for the Assembly.

C. Roll Call

The General Secretary called the roll, indicating that there were several apologies for absence. It was **agreed** that Hieromonk Hilarion Alfeyev act as substitute for Metr. Kirill of Smolensk.

D. Minutes of previous meeting

As most members had not yet received a copy of the minutes of the meeting of 15-18 September 1998 held in Amersfoort, Netherlands, it was **agreed** to accept the record, which had been noted by the Officers, with the proviso that any error subsequently found be reported to the General Secretariat.
(The minutes were distributed to members during the Assembly).

E. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

The agenda and timetable were accepted as proposed. Members of the Executive would be invited to go to Beit Hall to register at a convenient point during the meeting, in order to avoid a long wait. Some time would be set aside for Bishop Talbert to report on the work of the Nominations Committee.

2. REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Although the period since the last meeting of the Executive had been mainly taken up by final preparations for the Assembly, special note should be taken of the **50th anniversary celebrations** which were organised in a variety of ways by member churches in many parts of the world, particularly in cities where previous assemblies had taken place.

Following the celebrations in Amsterdam on 19 September, which members of the Executive had attended, several special events took place in Geneva. On Sunday 20 September a service in St Pierre Cathedral brought together the Geneva churches for a colourful celebration. Two days later, a Round Table focusing on the ecumenical contribution to the sturggle for implementation of Human Rights had taken place at the Ecumenical Centre. Those invited to take part in the discussion, which was chaired by Dr Janice Love, included Mr Flavio Cotti, president of the Swiss Confederation; Dr Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Metropolitan Georges Khodr, Patriarchate of Antioch, Lebanon; Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town; and Ms Estela de Carlotto, president of the Argentinian association "Grandmothers of the Plazo de Mayo".

Dr Raiser expressed his gratitude to those friends in the Geneva churches who had supported these events and helped to ensure their success. In mid-November, an ecumenical worship service in the Chapel of the Ecumenical Centre with the participation of members of many local churches, had been televised throughout Switzerland.

Dr Raiser reported on two **visits** made to North America: in Toronto he had met with the ecumenical network in Canada, which was a very encouraging experience. In Atlanta he had an encounter with senior staff of CNN, as a result of which this news network was to be represented at the Assembly by its chief executive, who would also participate in a Padare event. Dr Raiser also attended an ecumenical service in Chicago during which several churches joined in an act of recommitment to the ecumenical movement.

The second visit was for an occasion to honour Bishop Anderson for his commitment and service as chairman of the US Conference over the past several years. The occasion was further marked by the instituting of a Scholarship Fund which would be used to sponsor two or three students annually to engage in a one-year programme of ecumenical studies. This demonstration of the Black Churches' commitment to the ecumenical movement had met with a warm response.

Regarding **Assembly preparations**, the general secretary reported that Rev. John Pobee, Mr Melaku Kifle, and other staff had spent considerable time in Harare in order to ensure that the churches were aware of the implications of the assembly; they also met with government representatives to obtain their support. The major obstacle all through the preparation period had been the University itself, which - under financial pressure from the government - had decided to privatise all services including catering, security, cleaning services, and so on, which had meant that there were few university staff present on campus to prepare for the arrival of WCC staff and assembly participants. However, after considerable efforts on the part of WCC staff, it appeared that logistical and organisational arrangements were finally in hand.

Dr Raiser urged members of the Executive to help interpret to delegates the difficulties encountered, and to deal with understanding with the many imperfections they were likely to find during the coming days.

The political situation in Zimbabwe continued to be very difficult, and the country was experiencing a severe economic crisis, with the exchange rate of the Zim.dollar dropping out of all proportion. With the need to import most of the necessary raw materials, prices were constantly increasing which made life more and more difficult for the majority of the population.

Following up the matter of **Orthodox Relations** discussed at the meeting in September, Dr Raiser said that staff had concentrated on two aspects: working on a possible frame of reference for the proposed mixed theological commission, and the preparation of a discussion document for the Policy Reference Committee to help members formulate a constructive recommendation leading to the establishment of such a commission. He affirmed that all the Orthodox Churches (with the exception of Georgia and Bulgaria) were sending delegations to the assembly, although in some cases these would be of reduced size.

In concluding his remarks, Dr Raiser expressed his appreciation for the way in which members of the Executive had included him in their fellowship since he had joined the staff in 1993. He was particularly grateful for their support, and that of his fellow Officers, during these past years which had been increasingly difficult in many respects.

The Moderator thanked the general secretary for his report. Referring to the 50th anniversary celebrations in Geneva, he said he had been particularly moved by the ecumenical service in St Pierre Cathedral which he described as an authentic manifestation of "people's ecumenism", with participation of people from all walks of life. He believed these events had been of special importance, not only for the churches and people of Switzerland but for the WCC at large.

Discussion

Dr Kässmann asked how the WCC could hold an assembly in a country that was in such turmoil and yet remain silent? If it was not possible to make a public statement because this would not be helpful for the churches of Zimbabwe, at what point could the Council speak out/say something and give support to the country/people?

Dr Raiser responded that close contacts had been established with people in Zimbabwean civil society and there were indeed expectations that the Council would say something. On the other hand, it would be problematic for the assembly to address the situation in Zimbabwe apart from a process of consultation with its member churches there. A number of steps had been agreed: for the initial press conference, and as a response to journalists, a note had been prepared based on past statements that had been made, including the pastoral letter of July 1998 from the Zimbabwe churches and the response to this by the Council. In addition, Unit III involvement in reviewing the situation in Africa over the last three years had produced valuable material expressing the concern and commitment of African Christians. Further, it would be important to seek opportunities to enter into consultation with a number of key people in the Zimbabwe churches; several church leaders were sensitive to the situation and had shown that they had the courage to speak out.

As an example, Dr Raiser referred to the statement made to the Fifth Assembly by Canon Burgess Carr, as general secretary of AACC at the time of the Nairobi Assembly. This had had a liberating effect and had allowed the assembly to speak its own word on the issues at stake.

If ways could be found to organise that kind of dialogue at this assembly, that would be helpful; the fact of sharing each others' troubles may provide insights into what might be an appropriate way of addressing the situation - perhaps in the form of a letter to the Zimbabwe churches, or a visit to appropriate authorities. It was felt that a public statement would probably be the last of the options to be used, so this should be discouraged as it would be the least effective way of bringing up the Council's concerns and expressing solidarity.

Mr Kobia noted that the situation had deteriorated further in the past few days. The President was out of the country but was giving interviews during his visit to London and other European cities; the effects of the continuing participation of Zimbabwean soldiers in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo was being criticised from many sides.

Dr Tolen felt that a statement by the churches could be helpful in terms of providing an entry point for the assembly to speak. He referred to the statement on human rights

which he thought would be accepted by the assembly, as this referred to other countries besides Zimbabwe. But the WCC may come under pressure from some participants to say something.

Dr Nababan noted that during the First Assembly in 1948, Indonesia had been at war with the Netherlands but no word was said about this. The Council was not in a position to do what was properly the task of the churches.

Bishop Talbert reminded members that it was important to remember the discipline of prayer which was not talked about very much. We must ask for God's guidance in the midst of this turmoil, and listen to each other in prayer. If we were to act in response to God's calling, we must keep in touch with God's spirit.

Dr Kässmann was grateful for the suggestions made, and urged that the delegates be informed about what the Council was going to do with regard to the situation in Zimbabwe. A way must be found to assure them that there would be a way to express solidarity with the people of this country.

...

Mr Epps felt that there would be many ways in which the assembly would be speaking about the situation in Zimbabwe - but people must listen in order to hear what was said.

Mr Kobia reiterated that in the last three months there had been many visits by staff to Zimbabwe for discussions with the churches, trying to help them in preparing for the assembly and in understand the significance of an assembly taking place here - it was not easy for people to grasp what that meant. Listening to civil society, it was clear that there were more expectations than there had been earlier on, and people were waiting to see what would happen.

Summarising the discussion, the Moderator suggested a plan of action:
-- there should be some dialogue between the assembly and the churches in relation to different issues;
-- it may be appropriate to write a pastoral letter to the churches;
-- talks with state officials and the churches should be maintained.

However, it was not possible either for the general secretary, the officers or members of the Business Committee to do these things. He proposed that an ad hoc task force be appointed, to include Dr Aaron Tolen, and staff members Sam Kobia, John Pobee and Dwain Epps. They would be responsible for monitoring the situation and providing necessary information to the Business Committee.

This was **agreed**.

Further, the general secretary pointed out that this whole issue would probably be raised in the Assembly at the point when proposals on Public Issues were introduced. A response could then be made by the Moderator or the general secretary, interpreting how it was intended to respond to the situation, so that the assembly would be reassured. This would help to avoid a long list of requests from delegates for statements on all kinds of issues; we should keep to the strategy that the assembly only make statements on basic policy and not comment on ongoing political issues.

Commenting on another aspect of the General Secretary's report, Bishop Talbert spoke of the celebration in the US to honour Bishop Anderson. This had indeed been a really special occasion, and he expressed warm thanks to Dr Raiser for the way he had entered into the spirit of it.

Fr Kishkovsky referred to the 50th anniversary celebrations which members of the Executive had attended in Amsterdam on 19 September. He had found this a moving and dignified and joyful occasion. In the symposium he had perceived a particular dynamic, a vision or image created by a Dutch speaker who had so movingly described the situation in Europe 50 years ago at the time of the formation of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948.

3. ORTHODOX PARTICIPATION IN THE WCC

Mr Georges Lemopoulos introduced a document updating the present situation (see Appendix III). During the period since September staff had been trying to listen to and interpret what the Orthodox Churches were saying and what some other member churches were doing in seeking ways to resolve this difficult situation. Bishops from Germany and Scandinavia, for example, had visited some Orthodox Churches and had discussions with them, sharing concerns on both sides, thus contributing to a deepening of the sense of participation in the ecumenical movement and the World Council.

At the pre-assembly meetings in the Middle East and in the Nordic countries, to give another example, the concern had been very present - an indication that the spirit of CUV was already active, with churches taking the initiative to discuss problems and issues with each other.

The general secretary had visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate and met with the Ecumenical Patriarch as convenor of the Thessaloniki meeting. Staff had also visited other churches to share concerns and information about latest developments.

Staff had been involved in trying to implement the recommendations of the Executive Committee at its meeting in September. A staff group had begun working and drawing up the profile, mandate, and possible areas of discussion of the "Special Commission" suggested by Orthodox Churches (as indicated in the background document circulated so far only to members of the Executive). This document had been prepared to help the Executive gain a clearer image of what the "Special Commission" might be, so that when the Policy Reference Committee at the Assembly came to the point of formulating any proposed action, the delegates would have some background information on the issues. If approved, the document would also serve as background for the special theological commission itself.

Fr Alfeyev considered this to be a good paper with a thorough treatment of the theme of Orthodox participation in the WCC. He suggested that as the Thessaloniki paper was quoted, it might be helpful if that were also distributed as background material to assembly participants. The general secretary responded that all participants had already received the book *Orthodox Reflections on the Way to Harare* which contained the full text of the Thessaloniki paper.

Fr Kishkovsky was also grateful for this helpful background document which contained good material and helpful signs for the road ahead. But he called for caution, since, while it was appropriate to use the title Mixed Theological Commission, there was a nuance in that it would be dealing with an ecumenical issue, not just an Orthodox problem; he urged that this dimension not be lost sight of.

Closing the discussion, the Moderator said that both he and the General Secretary would mention the issue in their reports to the Assembly. Dr Raiser expressed the hope that members of the Executive would see themselves as interpreters of the situation; there was a good deal of concern on the part of many people as to what the assembly may do and say on this matter.

The documents were referred to the Programme Sub-committee.

At a later session, Rev. Nélida Ritchie reported on behalf of the Sub-committee, which had made a number of recommendations. These were **agreed** by the Executive Committee as follows:

> *The Executive Committee **welcomed** the recent developments in the relationships between the Orthodox Churches and the WCC, especially the various contacts and discussions which have encouraged the building up of a positive spirit, resulting in the participation of delegations from practically all Orthodox Churches in the Assembly.*

The Executive Committee ***reiterated*** *its suggestion to Policy Reference Committee I to consider the formation of a Special Commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC soon after the Assembly, and present to the Assembly a recommendation for action.*

Further, the Executive Committee ***received*** *a background document (see Appendix IV of these minutes) describing the terms of reference for the above-mentioned Special Commission, and* ***referred*** *this document to the Policy Reference Committee I to facilitate its task of preparing a recommendation for action, as well as the preparatory work which would follow for setting up the Special Commission.*

At the suggestion of Fr Kishkovsky, the Executive **agreed** to add the following sentence:

The Executive Committee ***expressed its conviction*** *that the process of dialogue on the participation of the Orthodox Churches in the WCC would be deepened by a clear sign of affirmation from the Assembly.*

4. PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MODERATOR

Ms Birgitta Rantakari reported that at 30 September 1998 there was a surplus of more than CHF 1.4 million on the 1998 budget. Investments had performed well, although it was important not to rely on investment income in view of the volatility of the markets.

For 1999, the draft budget showed a deficit of CHF 51,000, a considerable improvement on the version presented in September. She felt this was a reasonable situation to hand over to the new Executive. It was clear that particular attention should be given in the future to programme analysis and priorities. Finance management - reporting, monitoring and planning - were going well but could still be further improved.

It was noted that in order to achieve a "balanced budget" as specified by the Executive in September, expenditure had been shifted from what had been considered as "operating" costs to "activities" - i.e. activities for which income had to be raised. This was the area which had suffered most from the decrease in income, which meant that a number of planned activities could not be engaged in until funding for them was assured. For this reason it was vitally important to focus attention on income development.

Staff would be giving attention to working out the systems used for maintaining relationships with donors, presenting funding proposals and reporting - standards for

which were ever more demanding. It should also be understood that traditional donors were themselves facing financial stringency, so fund-raising would become even more difficult in the future. That was why it was urgent to explore new sources of funding, and the reason for putting resources into income development.

With regard to future fund-raising efforts in the US, and following the decision to end EDI (the Ecumenical Development Initiative) at the end of 1998, a basic understanding had been reached with the NCCCUSA by which the WCC would continue to seek increased financial support within the USA. The next two years would be considered as a transition period.

A consultant would continue efforts to seek funding for the renovation work needed at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, and the Ecumenical Centre. No decision had yet been made by the Geneva Legislative Chamber regarding the pending application for a subsidy for renovating the Ecumenical Centre, although this had been promised for October /November 1998. The feasibility study requested in relation to the renovation work at Bossey was not yet completed but would be presented to the new Executive at its meeting in March 1999.

Regarding the Assembly budget, the total for contingencies had been slightly increased.

5. PUBLIC ISSUES

Rev. Dwain Epps introduced a paper setting out draft guidelines for a statement on **Human Rights**, noting that the Nairobi Assembly in 1975 had been the last occasion on which a review of human rights policy had been done by the Council. The Vancouver Assembly had adopted a statement that took the form of an action agenda rather than a policy review. The intention at Harare was to update the Council's policy, reaffirming the substance of the Nairobi statement and looking at areas of emerging concern. The text would be further worked on by the Public Issues Committee of the Assembly.

Reference was made to the statement adopted by the Executive Committee at its meeting in September 1998 which included a Draft Declaration on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It had agreed that this draft be submitted to the Assembly Business Committee with the recommendation that it be adopted by the Assembly at an early business session so that it could be released during a special event in the framework of the Padare to mark the 50th anniversary of the Declaration on 10 December.

It was agreed that Dr Aaron Tolen be invited to present this Declaration to the Assembly. Participants would then be given 24 hours before being asked to vote on it, thus making the Declaration their own. It was noted that no amendments to the text could be accepted.

Mr Epps went on to report on a consultation of experts regarding **Jerusalem** held in October 1998. A set of draft guidelines were developed which were subsequently used as a basis for consultation with the heads of churches in the Middle East as well as with some political figures. At the same time, comments were invited on the guidelines from Muslim and Jewish legal experts in order to gain their perspectives. These guidelines, after revisions based on new insights gained, represent a broad consensus among those concerned, and were acceptable to the political side also. The text would be elaborated into a statement reiterating the Council's policies made over the years in respect to Jerusalem.

It was pointed out that until now, the Council had held the view that an agreement with respect to Jerusalem had to be seen as part of a broader settlement of the wider conflict in the Middle East. It was now saying that Jerusalem could no longer be left until last, but because of its importance and the tensions that have focused on it, it had become the heart of the problem. Any comprehensive peace agreement now depended on resolving the problem of Jerusalem.

A second shift of direction was being addressed in a more round-about way: until now, the Council had talked about Jerusalem in post-1967 terms - a city which was the result of occupation. But now with this statement it was necessary to go back to the original definitions of Jerusalem as mandated in 1947 and who has the right to live there. Staying with the present status quo would not lead to resolving the points of conflict.

In a recent colloquium in Jerusalem, the Roman Catholic Church had also shifted its view, now talking about Jerusalem in its entirety rather than the "Old City". Staff had met the representative of the Holy See in Jerusalem, and the implications of a document issued by the colloquium were discussed. It appeared that the policies of the RCC and of the WCC were now so close that it may be possible for Bishops' Conferences and NCCs related to the WCC to take joint positions and adopt joint statements on the future of Jerusalem. This would strengthen our hand for lobbying national governments.

The Council had continued its contacts with the Latin Patriarch, Michael Sabah, who had encouraged the Holy See to shift its policy, confirming that the importance of a Christian presence in Jerusalem was that which stimulates dialogue amongst the religions in order to find some possible consensus solution.

Responding to a question on the draft guidelines, Mr Epps agreed that it should refer to

the "international community" rather than to the UN General Assembly. With respect to the shape of the political status, in recent discussions various models had been considered. Putting Jerusalem under international jurisdiction was not considered workable. The issue of sovereignty was key. Israel says this should be Israel, while the Palestinians argue that the whole of Jerusalem as defined in the Partition Plan belongs under Palestinian sovereignty. Both sides say that they would protect the others' needs, but few believe that a single sovereignty is a viable option.

Thus the model of shared sovereignty is preferred, though details remain to be negotiated. Some say that there should be a unified city with a unified government with a joint commission overseeing it, and that it be the capital of both Israel and Palestine. We have been warned not to take up this discussion as we would not get very far. Rather we should affirm the principles to be honoured under any kind of sovereignty. It was the role of the church to hold the political structures accountable to the people.

The following procedures for **Public Issues at the Assembly** were proposed:

-- there would be a presentation on Public Issues to the Assembly on Friday 4 December prior to the Moderator's report. This was usually done by the general secretary on behalf of the Executive and would refer to the two proposed statements;

-- reference would also be made to the fact that delegates could propose additional statements: these should be in writing and be presented to the moderator or rapporteur of the Public Issues Committee by Saturday midday. The PIC would consider the proposals received, and recommend to the Business Committee what additional actions, if any, should be taken.

The document was referred to the Programme Sub-committee.

At a later session, Rev. Nélida Ritchie reported that the Sub-committee had made some comments and recommendations, which the Executive Committee **agreed** as follows:

> *The Executive Committee **approved** the draft guidelines for a statement on Human Rights and for a statement on Jerusalem for submission to the Public Issues Committee of the Assembly for further elaboration and presentation to the Assembly for adoption.*
>
> *The Executive Committee **agreed** to invite the Public Issues Committee*
> *- to sharpen paragraph 10 of the draft statement on human rights, underlining the fact that no society is free from violation of human rights and that, consequently, all countries still have to achieve something in the area of human rights;*

- to consider whether adding a reference to the rights of labour unions would be appropriate and useful, taking into consideration the specific context of the Assembly.

6. GLOBALIZATION

Rev. Sam Kobia presented a document entitled "In Faith and Solidarity affirming Life in the Context of Globalization". Noting that an increasing amount of literature was addressing this issue, it was not the Council's intention to add to that, but rather to work on an alternative. Several offerings and seminars on globalization would take place in the framework of the Padare, as well as a special Hearing which Unit III was involved in.

The general secretary warned that a distinction must be made between recommendations that concerned the WCC's future work - which must come through the Programme Guidelines Committee - and articulating a framework for the churches to help them understand and interpret the ecumenical challenge. This latter was not a task for the WCC but was intended to provide a stimulation to the churches to participate actively in the discussion on globalization and mobilise the courage to develop an alternative vision which may have different implications for the churches.

Bishop Boseto said that if we really wanted the churches to unite, we should look more carefully at the unity of the people which already exists. He was struggling with the question of how to relate to the situation of the people back home, how to sustain community in relation to families?

Dr Raiser agreed with the focus proposed in the document on globalization but feared that it was so compact that it would need some interpretation, spelling it out in more detail in order to see the discussion behind it and to appreciate its full significance. Responding to Bp Boseto, he said this could not be accessible to the people. There was some expectation that the assembly would denounce globalization, but if we talk in a different manner without linking it up to the expectations of the delegates, we may create a difficulty of communication. Yet the question remained: how do we bring people in the churches, in local situations, into this process of reflection?

It was noted that the paper would go to Policy Reference Committee II. Dr Best, moderator of this Committee, said there had been a question about another paper that might serve as an additional background note to show how we had arrived at this point. Dr Raiser affirmed this, and said it would be up to the PRC II to decide how best to act on it, looking at the statement with a view to what it was supposed to initiate as a new level of discussion in the churches.

The document was referred to the Programme Sub-committee.

At a later session, Ms Ritchie presented the Sub-committee's report. It recommended, and the Executive Committee **agreed:**

> *that an additional document be drafted which would link/bridge the Council's work on globalization and the content of the document "In Faith and Solidarity Affirming Life in the Context of Globalization". The drafting could benefit from the inputs of the special Hearing and other Padare offerings on Globalization.*

The general secretary noted that the broader framework of the discussion would be reflected in the Padare. The document focused on what could be an alternative approach, and this focus was legitimate and should be maintained. It was not that a different document was needed; rather it was necessary to take people to the point of departure, and this would require an introduction leading into the reflection which the document takes up.

7. DRAFT STATEMENT ON DEBT CANCELLATION

Rev. Sam Kobia introduced this draft statement, and made reference to what the Sixth Assembly had said in 1983 at Vancouver.

Bishop Boseto asked how in practical terms could we approach governments, to communicate to them the thinking of the churches? This was very important for him. Were we courageous enough to take this up at that level?

Ms Rantakari said this question had also been discussed at the Nordic meeting. Delegates would bring a proposal to consider whether debt cancellation should be limited to the poorest countries.

Dr Raiser felt that on one level it was sound advice to focus on the severely indebted countries in Africa. However, the discussions which led to this draft statement had brought to the surface another feature, namely, that middle income countries had been forced increasingly to convert their debts into national bonds, to convert private debts into national debt, in such a way that they were becoming victims of the vagaries of the international financial markets. This had made it necessary not to limit the approach to the cancellation of debt to the most severely indebted countries - otherwise the middle income countries would themselves become poorer. The dynamics involved in the present financial system were leading us back to the need for a new approach to the whole practice of lending and borrowing.

Mr Kobia noted that there was an attempt in relation to the Debt campaign to focus on some specific areas; also at the global level there was a coalition working on this. The Council did provide support to initiatives that have been taken here.

In relation to the *Guidelines for a WCC Action Plan on Debt Cancellation*, Dr Tolen reminded the Executive that in the 1970s it was feared that TNCs may become a "monster", This was now indeed the case, and was an issue that must be addressed.

The protectionism being practised by some countries had further impoverished the rest of our countries, said Dr Santana, and this had led to unfair trading policies. What could be done to change a situation that was causing people to die, and threatening nature?

Bishop Talbert felt the Council was not specific enough in addressing the countries where there must be some accountability. That point was missing from the document. Although it called on churches and institutions to do certain things, when were we going to call those who were controlling these things to accountability, to power sharing, to economic sharing?

Bishop Boseto pointed out that they have a vision for saving the world, but then so did we. Somehow we must make it clear that the ecumenical movement really wanted to save the world. That would help simple people to understand.

The document was referred to the Programme Sub-committee.

At a later session, Ms Ritchie presented the report. On recommendation of the Sub-committee, the Executive Committee **agreed:**

> *to **receive** with appreciation the draft document on debt cancellation; they believed it was biblical and well-placed in the jubilee context.*

The Executive Committee **recommended** that:

a) the document be shortened and that it be made to focus more sharply on two areas: ethical lending-borrowing mechanism, and the challenge of how to break the debt burden cycle;
(b) more emphasis be placed on accountability of both the lender and the borrower;
(c) the churches be encouraged to create spaces for dialogue with respective governments and financial institutions, especially the banks;
(d) the document should recognise the work done on debt cancellation by churches and Christian World Communions.

With these observations, the Executive Committee

approved *the draft statement on debt cancellation as well as the background document to the WCC statement on debt, for submission to Policy Reference Committee II of the Assembly for further elaboration of the draft statement and presentation to the Assembly for action.*

Further, the Executive Committee

approved *the guidelines for a WCC action plan on debt cancellation for submission to the Assembly Programme Guidelines Committee for further consisderation.*

The general secretary noted that the comments made by the Executive would be attached to the text on debt relief to be given to Policy Reference Committee II. The Committee was of course free to reject or amend any such proposals and draft texts.

8. REPORT OF STAFFING AND NOMINATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

In a closed session, Dr Nababan presented the report of the Staffing and Nominations Sub-Committee.

A. Staffing Report

The Executive Committee **authorised** the General Secretary to proceed with the following appointments, the legal obligations of the World Council of Churches to be binding only as from the actual signing by both parties of the corresponding contracts.

1. APPOINTMENTS

Cluster on Issues and Themes: Team on Mission and Evangelism

- **Rev. Dr Nyambura Njoroge** (Kenya, Presbyterian Church of East Africa) as Executive Secretary for the Team on Education and Ecumenical Formation for four years from an agreed date

Cluster on Relations and Constituencies: Team on International Relations

- **Ms Geneviève Jacques** (France, Reformed Church of France), at present Consultant, as Executive Secretary for International Affairs for four years from 1 January 1999 (will complete 6 years 9 months' sercice)

Cluster on Communication

- **Ms Karin Achtelstetter** (Germany, Lutheran) as Media Relations Officer for four years from an agreed date

General Secretariat: Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

- **Rev. Dr Faitala Talapusi** (Western Samoa, Congregational Christian Church in Samoa) as Executive Secretary/Lecturer for four years from an agreed date.

II VACANCY

Finance, Service and Administration (OICD): Income Monitoring and Development

- Fund Raising Manager

III INFORMATION

1) Departures

It was reported that the following staff members had left, or would shortly leave, the service of the World Council of Churches on the dates indicated:

General Secretariat: Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

- **Fr Serapio Kabazzi-Kisirinya** (Uganda, Roman Catholic Church), Professor, on 31 Decembeer 1998 (will complete 2 years 3 months' service)

Finance, Service and Administration: Office for Income Coordination and Development

- **Ms Anu Talvivaara** (Finland, Orthodox Church of Finland [Eastern]), Associate Director, on 31 December 1998 (transferred to Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, as Administrative Staff)

2) Consultants

a) It was reported that the following consultant had been appointed by the General Secretary since the last meeting of the Executive Committee in September 1998:

Cluster on Relationships: Team on Regional Relations

- **Mr William Temu** (Tanzania, Roman Catholic Church), as Africa Secretary - Interim (Consultant) for 1 year from 1 December 1998 (will complete 3 years' service)

b) It was reported that the following consultant would leave the service of the World Council of Churches on the date indicated:

Cluster on Issues and Themes: Team on Mission and Evangelism

- **Dr Sarah Bhattacharji** (India, Church of South India), Consultant on Health and Healing, on 15 February 1999 (will complete 6 months' service).

B. Review of Assembly Committee Membership

A list of proposed Committee membership had been shared with members of the Executive, and the Sub-committee had given careful attention to it. With a few additions and changes, the Executive Committee **approved** the composition and leadership of Assembly Committees as proposed, for submission to the Assembly for adoption.

C. Proposals for nominations to be forwarded to the Nominations Committee of the new Central Committee for consideration

1. Appointment of a "Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC"
On recommendation of the Sub-committee, the Executive Committee **agreed**

*that a **Note** regarding the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches* (see Appendix IV) *be transmitted to the Nominations Committee of the new Central Committee, with the understanding*

- *that the General Secretary be instructed, in consultation with the future Officers, to initiate the process of consultation with member churches regarding the composition of the Special Commission, and*
- *that the new Executive Committee be authorised to approve the membership of this Commission at its meeting in March 1999.*

2. Faith and Order Standing Commission
The Sub-committee had considered the list of nominations submitted by the outgoing Board of Faith and Order. It proposed one change: that in order to improve the confessional balance, Dr Constance Tarasar, Orthodox Church in America, replace Rev. Dr William Rusch, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

With this change, the Executive Committee **agreed** that the list of nominations for the new Faith and Order Standing Commission be transmitted to the Nominations Committee of the new Central Committee for final consideration.

The General Secretary indicated that there was a proposal that Rev. Prof. David Yemba, United Methodist Church, Congo/Zimbabwe, be appointed Moderator.

3. Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church
The Sub-committee had received a list of names suggested for membership of the Joint Working Group on the WCC side (8 members and 5 consultants). After careful consideration, it recommended, and the Executive Committee **agreed**, to propose the

following names to the Nominations Committee of the new Central Committee for appointment to the JWG:

Prof. Sam Malukele, South Africa
Bishop Philipose Mar Eusebios, *Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church,* India
Bishop Dr Jonas Jonson, *Lutheran Church,* Sweden
Rev. Juan Sepulveda, *Pentecostal Mission Church,* Chile
Bishop Vasilios Karayannis, *Church of Cyprus,* Cyprus
Rev. Diane Kessler, *United Church of Christ,* USA.

It was proposed to seek further consultation during the Assembly regarding the names of two women - one from Asia and one from Eastern Europe. The names of five consultants would also be forwarded to the Nominations Committee.

It was pointed out that the name of Bishop Karayannis, Cyprus, appeared on both the Faith and Order and .the JWG lists. It was **agreed** that an alternative Orthodox nomination be sought for the Joint Working Group.

4. Core Board of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

On recommendation of the Sub-committee, the Executive Committee **agreed** to propose to the Nominations Committee of the new Central Committee that the following members be appointed to the Core Board of the Ecumenical Institute Bossey:

Rev. Dr Robert Welsh, *Disciples of Christ,* USA (Moderator)
Rev. Dr Wesley Ariarajah, *Methodist Church Sri Lanka*, Switzerland/USA
Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, *Lutheran Church,* Kenya/Switzerland
Dr Wanda Deifelt, *Lutheran Church,* Brazil
Dr Dietrich Werner, EKD, Germany
- Mr Georges Lemopoulos, WCC Deputy General Secretary - *ex officio*

Further consultation would take place regarding an additional Orthodox name. The Central Committee would appoint the remaining members of the Board (total 15) at its meeting in August 1999.

9. REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME SUB-COMMITTEE

Note: The reports on the four items dealt with by the Programme Sub-committee are included under the respective chapters in these minutes:

- Orthodox Participation in the WCC (pp. 7-8)

- Public Issues (p.11)
- Globalisation (p.13)
- Statement on Debt Cancellation (pp.14-15)

10. REPORT OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Mr Robert Christeler reported on the present financial situation of the Council:

1. Current Financial Situation: 9 months ending 30 September 1998.

At this stage there was a surplus of CHF 1,084,682. A deliberate effort had been made by staff to control expenses very carefully and the results showed that this effort had been successful. Mr Christeler believed that the WCC should strive to make itself financially independent from its investments. In 1998 so far there was an operating surplus in excess of investments.

The activities side had experienced a drop in income. In some cases the WCC forwards funds for specific activities where this is justified before the related income is received. Such cases were exceptions but sometimes involved considerable amounts of money. Secondly, the deficit on activities to some extent reflected a drawdown on fund balances.

Operating income had been above average for October 1998 and expenses had remained under strict control, which resulted in an operating surplus. Mr Christeler paid tribute to the staff who had renounced a part of the employer's contribution to the Pension Fund; this was an important factor financially and symbolically which contributed to a sense of solidarity. This Pension Fund decision was valid for the period 1998-1999; in the year 2000 the full employer's contribution would be re-instituted, and the situation would have to be addressed again.

Responding to a question as to whether the level of membership dues was stable, Mr Christeler said this had been fairly constant over the years. There had been a slight increase in recent years; some churches were sponsoring other poorer churches with regard to their membership fees, but care must be taken to avoid any sense of patronising. OCER was devising an appropriate approach to a possible system of "parrainage" of one church by another.

Dr Raiser felt this issue should be addressed in the Assembly Finance Committee. A revision to Rule I would come to the Assembly for ratification: this related to the Central Committee's decision to include for the first time an explicit reference to the obligation for all member churches to contribute to the financial basis of the WCC. A church should

pay a minimum of CHF 1,000, and only those that had made the effort to do so could count on a subsidy for their assembly delegates. This basic understanding should be picked up and re-stated by the Assembly Finance Committee.

On recommendation of the Sub-committee,

> *the Executive Committee* ***received*** *the financial report on the nine months to 30 September 1998 and* ***noted*** *with satisfaction the positive financial results.*

2. 1999 Budget

Mr Christeler reminded the Executive that a number of expenditure items, especially in the financial services of the Council, had been revised since the September meeting in Amersfoort. While some of the earlier income figures had been revised upwards, most of the reduction in the deficit had come from a painful exercise of decreasing budgeted expenditure, sometimes at the sacrifice of projected activities. However, the budgets had been drawn up by the new team coordinators, who would be held accountable for keeping to it. He had appreciated the open and cooperative spirit that staff had demonstrated, and he felt that this new approach was a good one.

If the renovation costs were not borne by the Etat de Genève, the amount the Council would have to contribute would need to be defined later on; very careful financial control would have to be exercised when these renovations were embarked upon, which might have an impact on 1999 figures. The impact of the financial side of the renovation programme would have to be assessed once all the facts were known. The result of our analysis would be submitted to the next Executive Committee.

On recommendation of the Finance Sub-committee,

> *the Executive Committee* ***approved*** *the revised draft of the 1999 budget, welcoming the process so far achieved and the criteria laid down. It* ***noted*** *the deficit on activities income and understood that these activities would be implemented only when adequate resources had been found.*

3. Review of Reserves

Mr Christeler reported that staff had been made aware of a considerable number of reserves of various nature and objectives; in some cases it had not been possible to identify the original purpose of such reserve funds. Staff had carried out a review of all reserves in the operating sector and were in process of constituting this into a WCC general reserve.

Ms Rantakari said that the Finance Sub-committee had requested a group to work on a "reclassification of reserves", setting criteria, in consultation with Robert Christeler, including Anna-Marie Aagaard, John Briggs and herself; they had been going regularly to Geneva.

The General Secretary felt it was appropriate to call on members of the outgoing Executive, but suggested that at least one member of the new Finance Sub-committee - probably the moderator - could also be part of this group, since they would have to implement any decisions made.

The appointment of a small group to include Prof. Anna-Marie Aagaard, Mr John Briggs, Ms Birgitta Rantakari, and Bishop Wolfgang Huber (or a member of the new Finance Sub-committee) to deal with the reclassification of reserves was **agreed**.

> *The Executive Committee **agreed** that the review process of consolidation and reclassification of Reserves be continued, and that clear criteria on the use of Reserves be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.*

4. Assembly Budget

The total budget of the Assembly - income	CHF 12.83 million
Total expenditure budget	CHF 12.815 million

Mr Christeler pointed out that the figures were meaningless in view of the uncertainties regarding some of the expenditure items. There was still a contingency figure of $670,000.

There was some concern on the income level: A total of CHF 800,000 was anticipated for accommodation, registration fees, etc. of which only 460,000 had materialised by mid-November 1998. If the expected amount of 340,000 for these items is not received the contingency might have to be used to compensate.

The budget included a starting balance, so it would be necessary to be able to transfer an amount to our successors to start off the Ninth Assembly. There had been some overspending in terms of the degree of readiness of the infrastructure in Harare, which had entailed additional costs.

Dr Best said delegates had been told that they would be billed in September, but she had not received anything. She had brought money with her, so perhaps others would do likewise. Many people expected the WCC to bill their churches. Dr Raiser responded

that staff had been behind schedule in sending out the bills; some may have been sent but not reached delegates before their departure.

Summarising the **overall financial situation**, Mr Christeler said that, regarding 1998, he expected a reasonable surplus. For 1999, in view of the planning so far, and the cooperative spirit shown by staff, he was confident that it would be possible to present balanced operating budgets and results in a consistent fashion.

On recommendation of the Finance Sub-committee,

> *the Executive Committee **noted** that the Council was working towards the goal of financial equilibrium in spite of a long and often painful process. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the finances/income of the Council had not been increasing, it had been possible through strict expenditure control to remain within budget.*

5. Future possibilities regarding income development

Mr Christeler reported that extensive discussions had taken place about the future of OICD - in terms of methodologies, logistics, staffing, etc. While a number of changes were needed as direct measures to reposition the department, efforts had been made to separate these into categories in relation to the different factors involved. We need to think in terms of our overall relations management with our principle donors and contributors.

It was noted that a padare would take place in which REOs had together prepared a programme to engage in dialogue with development agencies about this shift of focus. The way policies had been formulated and put into practice had placed some of the partners, including the WCC, in a very difficult situation. A number of member churches had seen their income decreasing, or had restructured as they look to the year 2000, so they had concentrated on these tasks rather than on the wider issues.

Concluding the report, Ms Rantakari said that, after many painful years, the Council was now working towards financial equilibrium. She paid tribute to the finance staff for their professional approach to their work. Finally, she wished to minute the Finance Sub-committee's gratitude to the staff of WCC, who had been very loyal, remaining in solidarity with the Sub-committee in spite of difficulties such as the freezing of salary levels and reductions in contributions to the Pension Fund. The FSC would not have been able to manage to do its work without the staff's valuable support.

11. WORK OF THE ASSEMBLY NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Bishop Talbert reported on the work of the Nominations Committee, noting that the election of the new Central Committee was one of the most difficult tasks facing the Assembly. A good deal of preparatory work had been done prior to coming to Harare, and, with the assistance of staff colleagues, a number of background documents had been produced to equip members of the Committee for their work. In addition, efforts had been made in the regions to achieve the necessary balances within the lists of proposed candidates received from member churches. Bishop Talbert urged Executive members to help wherever possible in responding to any questions they may be asked, interpreting the need for balances, and so on.

The distribution of seats among the Orthodox Churches would remain as in the past, even though some churches had not provided a full list of nominations.

The procedure for Nominations at the Assembly was agreed as follows: following Bishop Talbert's introductory report, the floor would be open for discussion. Delegates would be given a period of 48 hours during which they could send in written comments. The first slate of names proposed for Central Committee membership would then be presented. Any discussion should focus on the criteria on which the Nominations Committee had done its work; discussion of individual names would not be in order. If the election did not take place at that point, any further modifications to the list must be sent in writing within 48 hours. A final revised slate of names would be brought to the Assembly two days later on which delegates would be required to vote.

The general secretary pointed out that all those elected were appointed as representatives of the Assembly, not of a given member church. Admittedly this method had drawbacks, as many of those elected did not feel any responsibility towards their church: no obligation to report back after attending a meeting of Central Committee, or to report from their church to Central Committee. In such cases the member church concerned felt no obligation to provide financial support for its Central Committee member(s). Dr Raiser therefore urged the Nominations Committee to make every effort to underline that, while membership of Central Committee reflected the composition of the Assembly, once that was past they would function as the link between the WCC and their respective church.

Fr Alfeyev referred to a statement by the Moscow Patriarchate noting that it did not feel it appropriate to seek membership on the new Central Committee. He affirmed that the Russian Orthodox Church would be actively involved in the work of the Special Commission, and if its work were to produce positive results, then the ROC would wish to take up its seats on the Central Committee again. That was why they were asking for five places for their representatives on Central Committee. These may be nominated in

Harare with the understanding that they would not serve until a successful conclusion had been reached by the Special Commission.

12. CLOSING ACTIONS

The General Secretary expressed thanks on behalf of staff colleagues to the Officers, the Presidents, and members of the Executive. He hoped that contact would be maintained with those who would not continue any direct participation in the life of the Council.

The Moderator thanked participants as sisters and brothers in Christ. This meeting had brought them to the end of a stage in their lives. He believed the ecumenical journey would continue and that they would remain as part of that journey together in different ways and with different responsibilities. He saw the ecumenical movement as a *koinonia*-building process, believing *koinonia* to be a gift of God, broken because of human sin. That was the meaning of the ecumenical movement - to build up the *koinonia*. It was also a gift and calling, and he believed that, as the Executive Committee, in spite of difficulties and omissions, together they had been able to build up a *koinonia* and to bring a humble contribution to the *koinonia* building process on the global level.

Finally, the Moderator expressed his thanks to general secretary Konrad Raiser, vice-moderators Rev. Nélida Ritchie and Dr Soritua Nababan, the Presidents and members of the Executive Committee for their support during the years since Canberra.

Fr Kishkovsky had been delegated to express to the Moderator and Vice-moderators and to the General Secretary the appreciation and gratitude of the members of the Executive for the leadership and support they had given to the work of the Executive and Central Committees. The journey had been long and at times difficult, but not without joy.

The Closing Prayer was led by Bishop Anderson.

The Moderator adjourned this meeting of the WCC Executive Committee at 12.30 hrs on 2 December 1998.

APPENDIX I

ATTENDANCE

Presidents:	Bishop Vinton Anderson	
	Bishop Leslie Boseto	
	Ms Priyanka Mendis	
	Rev. Eunice Santana	
	Dr Aaron Tolen	
Officers:	H.H. Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia	(Moderator)
	Ephorus Dr Soritua Nababan	(Vice-Moderator)
	Pastora Nélida Ritchie	(Vice-Moderator)
	Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser	(General Secretary)
Members:	Dr Marion Best	
	Ms Virginia Gcabashe	
	Most Rev. Drexel Gomez	
	Rev. Dr Margot Kässmann	
	Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky	
	Ms Maryssa Mapanao-Camaddo	
	Ms Beatrice Odonkor	
	Ms Birgitta Rantakari	
	Bishop Melvin G. Talbert	
	Gr. Prot. Dr Georges Tsetsis	
	Rt Rev. Dr Zacharias Mar Theophilus	
Apologies:	Prof. Dr Anna-Marie Aagaard	
	Mr John Briggs	
	Metropolitan Daniel of Moldavia and Bukovina	
	Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk	
	Rt Rev. Dr J. Henry Okullu	
	Rev. Valamotu Palu	
	His Holiness Pope Shenouda	
Substitute:	Hieromonk Hilarion Alfeyev	

Staff:	Ms Jeanne Becher Rev. Myra Blyth Mr Robert Christeler Rev. Dwain Epps Rev. Samuel Kobia Mr Georges Lemopoulos Ms Mary Ann Lundy Rev. Carlos Sintado Mr Marlin VanElderen
Minute-writer:	Ms Rosemary Green
Administration:	Ms Ursula Zierl

APPENDIX II

MEMBERSHIP OF SUB-COMMITTEES

Sub-committee on Staffing and Nominations

Ephorus Dr Soritua Nababan	Moderator
Dr Marion Best	
Mr John Briggs	(absent)
Ms Virginia Gcabashe	
Archbishop Drexel Gomez	
Metr. Kirill of Smolensk	(absent)
Rev. Valamotu Palu	(absent)
- Fr Hilarion Alfeyev	

Sub-committee on Finance

Ms Birgitta Rantakari	Moderator
Prof. Anne-Marie Aagaard	(absent)
Bishop Vinton Anderson	
Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky	
Ms Maryssa Mapanao-Camaddo	
Bishop Henry Okullu	(absent)
Rev. Eunice Santana	
Bishop Melvin Talbert	

Sub-committee on Programme

Rev. Nélida Ritchie	Moderator
Bishop Leslie Boseto	
Metr. Daniel of Moldavia & Bukovina	(absent)
Dr Margot Kässmann	
Ms Priyanka Mendis	
Ms Beatrice Odonkor	
H.H. Pope Shenouda	(absent)
Dr Aaron Tolen	
Dr Georges Tsetsis	
Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophilos	

November 1998 **APPENDIX III**

ORTHODOX PARTICIPATION IN THE WCC
An Update

Recent developments

1. According to the latest information at the disposal of the assembly office, all Oriental Orthodox Churches would participate in the assembly, sending full delegations. From the Eastern Orthodox side, the churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Romania, Cyprus, Poland, Albania, the Czech Republic, America and Finland would be represented by their full delegations as initially announced; Russia and Greece would send delegations reduced in numbers; Jerusalem was still considering its decision; Serbia, Bulgaria and Georgia had not so far confirmed their participation. The extent and nature of participation by the Orthodox delegations would vary according to their interpretation of the Thessaloniki recommendations.

2. Some recent events which could have positive implications on Orthodox participation in the assembly, and in the WCC in general, included:

(a) An Extraordinary Pan-Orthodox Council, held in Sofia in September, had brought unity, reconciliation and peace to the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria which had been experiencing a schism since 1992. The normalization of the internal situation might have as a consequence, among other beneficial effects, a review of Bulgarian Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and the decision to withdraw from the WCC.

(b) Informal talks between Primates and church representatives on Orthodox participation in the life and work of the WCC took place both in the above mentioned conciliar assembly in Sofia, and in a festive meeting in Bucharest, as well as during the pilgrimage of the Primates of the churches of Constantinople and Greece to Mount Athos. The importance of sending Orthodox delegations to the assembly, as the Thessaloniki report recommends, was stressed on all occasions.

(c) The Patriarchate of Jerusalem was present in the pre-assembly meeting for the Middle East, thus announcing its intention to send a delegation to Harare.

From Thessaloniki to Harare

3. Following the discussion in the Executive Committee in September and the subsequent recommendations:

(a) the General Secretary had shared the paper on "Orthodox participation in the WCC - The Current Situation: Issues and Ways Forward," as well as the recommendations of the Executive Committee, with all member churches;

(b) the Assembly Office had distributed the above-mentioned paper to all assembly participants together with the book entitled "Orthodox Reflections on the Way to Harare";

(c) the Orthodox Task Force had shared both the paper and the book with the Primates of all Orthodox churches, unfolding the spirit of the discussions at the Executive Committee and informing them of the latest developments;

(d) a staff group had begun preparing a background paper on the composition, mandate and agenda of the "Mixed Theological Commission" suggested by Orthodox churches in Thessaloniki. The staff group was elaborating a proposal attempting to clarify some of the issues related to the formation and functioning of this Commission, with the understanding that informal contacts and a continuous consultation process would help in formulating the common expectations from the Commission. It was hoped to share the proposal with the Executive Committee at its meeting before the assembly and subsequently to submit it to Policy Reference Committee I for further discussion.

4. Responding to an invitation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the General Secretary had visited the Church of Constantinople and had reviewed the present situation with H.H. Patriarch Bartholomew and the Commission on Ecumenical Affairs. The exchange on the emerging profile and mandate of the "Mixed Theological Commission" was particularly encouraging (see below - Note on Visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate).

5. In accordance with the Thessaloniki recommendations that Orthodox delegates speak out on Orthodox concerns, further thoughts on the preparation of the two plenaries on CUV had helped to clarify the notion of "ample space" to be allocated for discussing Orthodox issues. There would be a number of occasions in *plenaries* (following the Moderator's and General Secretary's reports, the CUV plenaries, the business plenary dedicated to the PRC I report), in *hearings* (especially during the second phase and in the framework of the hearing on "Moving Together"), as well as in *PRC I* (to which Orthodox delegates may present their suggestions in writing). It was felt that it would be important to communicate these possibilities to as many participants as possible and to encourage Orthodox delegates to take the floor and formulate their views. Also, time and space were reserved for discussions on the Orthodox understanding and participation in the ecumenical movement during the *Padare*. The Orthodox Task Force had begun to explore ways to make effective use of this space and time.

The way forward

6. While the consultation process with Orthodox churches should continue until the assembly, it was also important to explore ways of providing some Orthodox churches with responsible and detailed information about recent developments both in other Orthodox churches and in the WCC with regard to preparations for the assembly and beyond. The Orthodox Task Force will be invited to consider ways, including visits if necessary (e.g. the team visit to Bulgaria and the consultation process with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem on the question of Jerusalem could be considered appropriate opportunities), to keep Orthodox churches informed.

7. A careful look at the Thessaloniki report, given time for considered reflection, would suggest a careful and positive consideration of what constitutes the very heart of this paper: the realistic assessment of growing anti-ecumenical views and attitudes within some Orthodox churches, the unanimous affirmations with regard to Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and the WCC, as well as a number of legitimate Orthodox concerns which should be further discussed by the "Mixed Theological Commission". Recent attempts to interpret and foster the positive elements in the Thessaloniki document indicated that what seemed to be a "stumbling block" on our road could be transformed into a "door" ensuring the continuation of our common journey. It would be important to place what Orthodox churches are saying - keeping the urgency and specificity of the request - within the framework of a meaningful follow-up to the fundamental ecumenical concerns emerging from the CUV reflection process.

Note on General Secretary's visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, October 1998

The visit was arranged at the suggestion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in order to provide an opportunity to review the situation following the Thessaloniki meeting and to prepare for the Harare Assembly. After a conversation with the Ecumenical Patriarch, the General Secretary met with the Synodal Commission for Inter-Christian Relations, presided by Metr. Athanasios.

The main agenda item was to consider the mandate, process and modalities for the work of the proposed "Mixed Theological Commission". It was pointed out that:

1. The term "Mixed Theological Commission" was a technical term used for bilateral commissions between the Orthodox churches and ohter partners, and was not appropriate in this case. We should rather speak of a "special" or "ad hoc" commission, since the Orthodox churches are themselves members of the World Council of Churches.

2. Such a commission should be formed soon after the Eighth Assembly. It was suggested that the Ecumenical Patriarch write a letter to the Primates of the Orthodox churches, reporting on the General Secretary's visit, indicating the assessment of the situation six months after the Thessaloniki meeting, and outlining the procedures suggested regarding the Special Commission.

3. The WCC General Secretary would then confirm the understandings reached and invite the Patriarch to write to the Orthodox churches asking them to appoint their representatives. The General Secretary would himself initiate the process of nomination of representatives from other WCC member churches. It was understood that the Oriental Orthodox Churches should be fully represented, but the modalities of invitation had yet to be clarified.

Regarding the size of the Commission, the understanding was that the Orthodox churches each be represented by one person, the larger churches eventually being invited to send two representatives. In order to secure equal representation, there should be the same number of representatives from non-Orthodox churches. The Commission should have the possibility of inviting consultants or advisers, particularly if sub-commissions were to be formed. It was further noted that, among the Orthodox churches, the Orthodox Church of America should also be represented.

4- It was hoped that the persons nominated from both Orthodox and non-Orthodox sides would be qualified and experienced enough to guarantee a serious discussion. The Commission should receive a mandate for approximately three years, and sufficient time should be available to avoid taking decisions under emotional pressure.

To summarise, it was noted that the fundamental Orthodox concerns were being taken into consideration, especially through the recommendations of the Executive Committee in September 1998, the preparatory work for setting up the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, and the provision made to include the issue on the agenda of Policy Reference Committee I at the Assembly.

The Special Commission should probably have a double accountability: i.e. to the Orthodox Churches and to the WCC Central Committee. The procedure for receiving and approving the report would have to be worked out.

APPENDIX IV

SPECIAL COMMISSION ON ORTHODOX PARTICIPATION IN THE WCC

"On the threshold of the 21st century, all existing ecumenical structures must reassess themselves in the light of the challenge to manifest a form and quality of global community characterized by inclusiveness and reconciliation."

(CUV 2.9)

"It is strongly suggested that a Mixed Theological Commission be created with Orthodox members appointed by their own respective churches and from WCC nominees. The Mixed Commission will begin its work after the Harare Assembly by discussing the acceptable forms of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and the radical restructuring of the WCC"

(Thessaloniki Meeting)

1. Introduction

Statements and actions arising out of Orthodox churches in the past two years have indicated that we have entered a particularly critical phase in the relations between Orthodox churches and the World Council of Churches. This situation arises partly from tensions experienced by the churches internally, due in large part to groups who stand against ecumenical activity in general. But it also arises out of a sharpened perception by Orthodox churches of problems in the way in which the WCC is structured and how it functions.[1]

At the Inter-Orthodox meeting at Thessaloniki (May 1998), delegates from the Eastern Orthodox churches urged the formation of a commission which would explore ways in which Orthodox and Protestant[2] partners can work together in more constructive and mutually satisfactory ways within the World Council of Churches. Moreover, it is increasingly apparent that many of the issues which had been associated chiefly with the

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1. Background and reference information can be found in the paper prepared by the WCC Orthodox Task Force, "Orthodox Participation in the WCC -- The Current Situation: Issues and Ways Forward", and in the book *Turn to God -- Rejoice in Hope: Orthodox Reflections On the Way to Harare.*

2. In the context of this paper the term "Protestant" is used to include Anglicans and Protestants.

Orthodox are being felt and expressed within a large number of churches across the confessional spectrum. Therefore, to address such questions responsibly has the potential not only of stemming the crisis that is currently being felt most acutely in the Orthodox churches, but also of significantly strengthening and even widening the ecumenical fellowship as it now exists.

Such a strengthening and broadening is at the heart of the concerns which inform the WCC's reflection process *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*. But, as the Lambeth Conference most recently suggested, it is clear that the CUV policy statement represents only a beginning, a point from which the Council needs to further reflect - broadly and creatively - on how it can better represent and serve the churches.

The recommendation from Thessaloniki to form a "Mixed Theological Commission" to discuss "Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and the radical restructuring of the WCC" was endorsed by the WCC Executive Committee at its meeting in Amersfoort in September 1998, and is now being submitted for action to the Eighth Assembly of the WCC in Harare.

The present paper is an attempt to explore the terms of reference for this Commission, i.e its mandate, nature and composition, and to suggest what might be the possible areas of discussion which could form the parameters of its agenda.

As a result of a preparatory study, undertaken by an ad hoc staff group, it is submitted to the Executive Committee for further consideration.

2. Terms of Reference

It was noticed right from the beginning that it could be rather misleading to use the term "Mixed Theological Commission", which has a particular meaning for bilateral theological dialogues. Instead it is suggested that this new instrument be designated as a ***"Special Commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC"***. The Commission would be "*mixed*", half of its members being Orthodox and half Protestant. It would be a "*Special Commission*" in the sense that, mandated by the Assembly and within the broader framework of the CUV process, it would have to reassess the existing structures of the WCC in the light of the most recent ecumenical developments and challenges. It would also be a Commission *"on Orthodox participation in the WCC"* because, although most of the concerns go beyond merely the Orthodox world, its function would be mainly to address "the Orthodox situation".

(a) Mandate

It is suggested that the Special Commission be mandated to:

i) *Study and analyze*
   - issues in the current crisis in Orthodox participation in the WCC;
   - the resonance felt in Protestant and other churches or ecumenical partners concerning these issues;
   - the ways in which the CUV process has (or has not), can (or cannot) now address these issues.

ii) *Provide interim reports* of its work to each meeting of the WCC Central Committee, *invite responses* to its ongoing discussions from ecumenical partners, and *make public* the substance of its deliberations as it considers appropriate and useful.

iii) *Convey its findings with recommendations for action* to the WCC Central Committee on the basis of the above.

(b) Nature, Composition and Methodology of the Commission

i) Nature/Composition
   - Having already received the support of the Executive Committee, the Commission would be created following the Assembly's appropriate decision and the implementation of this decision by the Central Committee;
   - the Commission would be a "mixed body" in the sense that half its members would be determined by the Orthodox churches according to already existing inter-Orthodox processes, and half after consultation with other member churches;
   - the WCC general secretary would be an ex officio member of the Commission;
   - the Commission may consider inviting to its meetings delegated observers from the Roman Catholic Church and other non-member churches of the WCC.

ii) Accountability
   - The Commission would report to WCC Central Committee as the governing body of the Council responsible for the implementation of policy decisions related to the programmatic activities and the structural organization of the WCC;
   - Commission members should maintain contacts with their churches. Orthodox members of the Commission would be responsible for bringing to the attention of the Commission the inter-Orthodox position/consensus with regard to the issues discussed;
   - The Commission should have a fixed-term mandate in the first instance. An initial three-year mandate could be extended if needed. However, sufficient

time should be left for the preparations towards the next assembly, especially if constitutional changes are to be envisaged.

iii) Preliminary methodological and practical considerations

- The Commission may have two co-moderators. These could be appointed/ elected according to procedures in conformity with the prevailing ethos of the dialoguing partners. The co-moderators would convene the Commission and propose for discussion and adoption at its initial session a preliminary agenda for its first meeting;
- Preparatory encounters may take place prior to the meetings of the Commission as needed. Preparatory work may also include appropriate study papers to be prepared or "commissioned" for this Commission;
- The Commission might be divided into sub-committees as needed, which would, in turn, report to the Commission;
- The Commission meetings should be scheduled in a way that facilitates timely reporting to the Central Committee;
- While the sessions of the Commission are not public meetings - in the sense that attendance is limited to its members (or their authorized substitutes) and other persons whom it invites to participate - the Commission may decide to encourage discussion in the churches of the issues it is considering (for example, by making available study papers which it has considered or providing news releases reporting its discussions), taking care to indicate that such materials do not represent official positions taken by the WCC or any of its member churches;
- A budget line from the overall budget for governing bodies could be allocated to the Commission. Churches' participation in covering the expenses of the members of the Commission or in hosting its meetings would be particularly appreciated.

3. Possible Areas of Discussion

A number of areas of discussion are being suggested in this second part of the present paper, with the understanding that the Commission should not be considered as an instrument for *negotiating with the WCC* but, rather, as a forum in which partners in the fellowship enter into a *dialogue concerning the WCC*. They could constitute the principal parameters of what may become the agenda of the Special Commission.

(a) Changing contexts, enduring commitments *(cf. CUV chapter 1)*

- The Thessaloniki Report reaffirmed the Orthodox commitment to the ecumenical movement. Participants in the meeting were "unanimous in their understanding of the necessity for continuing their participation in various forms of inter-Christian

activities" (§ 6). Beyond the difficulties with the Council and its member churches, described in the report, what would be the contextual changes and challenges within the "Orthodox world" which would require "radical changes" in the WCC?

- What have fifty years membership in the WCC led to in terms of changed relationships internationally and locally? Is this changed situation reflected in the ethos and structure of the WCC?

(b) The WCC as a fellowship.

i) The fellowship as an "ecclesiological challenge"

- How do we perceive the Orthodox-Protestant co-existence within the same "fellowship of churches" as a real "ecclesiological challenge"?
- To what extent could the reception of ecumenical dialogue and of each other allow us to revisit the Toronto Statement?
- To what extent could we affirm that we belong to each other by our baptism?

ii) A genuine "Orthodox-Protestant dialogue" within the fellowship

- Probably for the first time, one may discover in an Orthodox statement a clear distinction between *the WCC* and its *Protestant member churches*. Indeed, the Thessaloniki report recognizes that "certain developments within some Protestant member churches of the Council that are reflected in the debates of the WCC" (§9) are to be found in the heart of many Orthodox concerns. This consideration may lead to some fundamental questions.
- What is the predominant culture in the WCC and what are its consequences on the life of the fellowship? There is a perception among the Orthodox that the cultural reality of a self-secularized Christianity seems to influence both the ecumenical theological reflection and the institutional expressions of ecumenism. It is true that discussions on secularization might bring the Council years back, when this issue was on the heart of the WCC agenda. And yet, today, a fresh input from Africa and Latin America could help member churches to look together at this issue in the light of a much larger perspective.
- How to address the Orthodox criticism that "the WCC does not take tradition seriously"? One of the main subjects of the Orthodox-Protestant dialogue should probably be a sustained effort to better understand the emphasis placed by Orthodox on Tradition and the difference with Protestantism which understands history (and Tradition) differently thus leading to certain hermeneutical principles and to different world views. Is Tradition a wall which separates Protestants and Orthodox? To what extent is the Montreal Statement on Tradition still valid? Could it inspire the present ecumenical dialogue? To what extent could the ecumenical theological dialogue develop a common

ecumenical point of view on Tradition as a tangible expression of churches' common confession of the apostolic faith?

- How do Protestant churches presently understand the denominational principle? The question is raised by the Orthodox within the WCC and in bilateral theological dialogues. The denominational consciousness of the Protestant side creates a difference of "ethos" within the Council as a fellowship of churches. What is the specific contribution of those Protestant churches who have united? How far are they close to share their experiences in moving towards visible koinonia? What are the implications of the "factual fellowship" between Protestant denominations when they participate in the life of the Council as a "fellowship of churches" and when, within this same fellowship, they meet with Orthodox churches? What are the implications of the bilateral relations in the context of the multilateral dialogue within the WCC? When discussing ecumenical methodology and the ecumenical agenda how could we make clear that "Orthodox" or "Roman" traditions (including ecclesiologies and "ethos") are of a different character from Protestant denominationalism? The nature and scope of the envisaged Orthodox-Protestant dialogue might depend on member churches' readiness to try to respond together to these questions. It might also depend on their awareness that looking together for responses will deepen and strengthen their fellowship because the dialogue here is envisaged as a challenge both to member churches themselves and the WCC structures. In other words, dealing with such fundamental questions in a dialogical spirit, member churches might together identify where the real problems are and thus explore together ways of changing the WCC structures accordingly.

(c) The WCC as an organization

i) Participation and Representation

- In their responses to CUV as well as in previous documents, Orthodox churches emphasized that there are three pressing issues in this area: an Orthodox participation "on equal footing", a participation which would allow a qualitative contribution to the fellowship, and a mode of election of representatives which would take into consideration ecclesiological criteria rather than structural rules and regulations. What are, therefore, the dynamics created by the numbers of member churches and their representatives? Is "membership", as an institutional arrangement with rights and responsibilities, the most appropriate way of ensuring a genuine contribution of the members of the fellowship? Is participation in the Council marked by numerical, geographical and other balances, or do these balances reflect deeper ecclesial and ecclesiological expressions which have to be further

studied? Is there a way of representation which would take more adequate account of the ecclesiological understanding of all the member churches?

ii) Decision- making

- Many would agree today that the parliamentary model adopted for the WCC in 1948 reflected a particular polity, which derived from specific Christian traditions. For some this polity presents ecclesiological and cultural difficulties. Is this the only possible model for the Council?
- Orthodox churches challenged very strongly the fact that, within the present structural form of the Council, matters affecting the ecclesiological self-understanding of churches are being decided upon by majority votes. Obviously, this Orthodox challenge has already been responded to in the amendment to the rules which precisely forbids voting on matters affecting ecclesiological self understanding. Yet, on a wider international level, decision-making by consensus has been adopted even by particular political fora. What would be the possibilities and limitations of a "consensus model"? Would it be viable to shift the Council's modus operandi to a greater emphasis on deliberation, sharing, listening to each other and trying to speak together, rather than on decision-making as such?
- Would it be feasible to explore a "flexible" practice, which would give priority to the consensus model and yet allow some decision-making especially in terms of, e.g. business matters (nominations, budget) and statements (public issues, concern for justice and peace, etc.)?

iii) "Institutionalization" of the ecumenical movement

- The Thessaloniki report affirmed and encouraged the Orthodox participation in "various forms of inter-Christian activity" (§ 6). At the same time, it called for "discussing the acceptable form of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and the radical restructuring of the WCC" (§ 16). How could churches assert their commitment to and co-responsibility for the ecumenical movement, how could they be recognized as ecumenical partners, independently of an "institutional" membership? To what extent would there be a convergence between the above mentioned Orthodox perception and the affirmation of the Policy Statement that "the WCC as an institution must not be paralyzed by institutionalism"?

iv) The WCC within the "one ecumenical movement"

- What is the distinctive role of the WCC within the one ecumenical movement? What are the lessons we can draw from what is seen in many churches as an increased favoring of bilateral ecumenism over multilateral ecumenism?
- What are and should be the specific opportunities and possibilities for multilateral dialogues?

v) The WCC and the ecumenical agenda

- How is the present agenda of the WCC affected by the de facto majority-minority relations within the Council? What are the wider ecumenical implications of the claim made in Thessaloniki (§ 9) that "the Orthodox *were obliged* to be involved in the discussion of questions entirely alien to their tradition"?
- To what extent should the agenda of the Council reflect the various concerns of its member churches, asking each other for counsel? To what extent should the agenda of the Council be shaped by the main concerns of the world at large, thus assisting the member churches to generate together a prophetic voice?
- What is the dynamic between the agenda setting and the results of ecumenical work?

(d) Membership

- Is the present form of membership (a choice made within a historical context, i.e. during the formation of the WCC fifty years ago, and reflecting a rather political model) the most appropriate one for the WCC today?
- Is participation in the life and work of the Council to be understood only in terms of a formal "membership"?
- Are there alternative forms of membership or participation which would reflect the reality of "being churches" rather than the organic link to an ecumenical organization?
- What are the questions emerging from the reflection process on the CUV which challenge the present understanding of membership ("beyond membership", "participation, not membership", "review of membership to include the RCC", etc.)?
- What is the present status of discussion within the Orthodox churches as to the form of their participation in the WCC (autocephalous/single/national churches; "one" church; a "family of churches") and what are the implications of their choice for the life of the WCC?
- What is the present status of the discussion within the Protestant churches as to the form of their participation in the WCC (several "national" churches from the same country; a "federation" of churches from the same country; "families" of churches) and what are the implications of their choices for the life of the WCC?
- To what extent has the present understanding of membership become an obstacle for the enlargement of the fellowship? How could we explain and overcome, in the perspective of the WCC as a fellowship of churches, the reservations of the Roman Catholic, Evangelical or Pentecostal churches?

(e) Emerging models for ecumenical organizations

As certain regional ecumenical organizations have been seeing fit to rethink and restructure themselves, and as regional church union agreements have developed, and as solutions are being sought to ameliorate the relationships between the WCC and the Orthodox churches, several models for ecumenical organizations have been emerging and circulating in ecumenical fora in recent years.

These include:

- Council of "Families of Churches"
- Council of "Councils"
- Ecumenical Forum
- Ecumenical Coalitions
- Churches Together
- Christian Councils
- Regional developments of visible koinonia and their impact on international church relationships (e.g. Leuenberg, Porvoo, etc.)

These models are listed here simply to draw attention to the variety of possibilities that have been/are being explored in the ecumenical world.